

Doctor says drop the fireworks, go see a show

There's a period right before and after July 4 when common sense seems to evade even the most grounded person.

No matter how many jaw-dropping professional fireworks shows take place throughout Maryland, some people are dead-set on taking the 'fun' into their own hands. The annual media reports about the dangers of consumer-used fireworks still are not enough to avoid 10,000 related injuries in the United States.

"This is exactly the right time," said Dr. Norman Dy, vice chairman of medicine at St. Agnes Healthcare. "If we could just give a shot of common sense this time of the year, that would be good."

Many local counties have bans on consumer fireworks.

Yet, people walk into local hospitals with a variety of injuries - the most common being third-degree burns. The hands are often the most scarred, with other patients coming in with eye damage.

Dr. Dy said people can lose limbs, fingers, toes and perhaps their eyesight "all because of a stupid mistake."

Recently, a neighbor approached Dr. Dy saying he bought "\$700 of the really good stuff."

Dr. Dy had one reaction: "What are you nuts? Do you want to burn down the neighborhood?"

The St. Agnes doctor said there is always ‘some guy,’ that wants to make a splash with company.

“Before I had kids, that ‘some guy’ was me,” Dr. Dy said.

Dr. Dy recently treated a patient who decided to throw a fireworks product off a wall. It bounced back.

Most fireworks-related injuries occur with young males, according to Dr. Dy, and one-third happen to children.

Many children use the popular sparklers as their July 4th fireworks exposure. The spark-shooting display seems harmless enough, but Dr. Dy cautioned that sparklers burn up to 1,000 degrees and can result in serious injuries.

“Children have no clue how hot sparklers are,” he said.

When children get their hands on something even more potent, calamity often ensues.

“Children are a dangerous mixture of curiosity and lack of coordination,” Dr. Dy said. When it comes time to release a would-be explosive, the children don’t have the reaction time to let go. They are often too scared at that point.

People should put aside their own need for an adrenaline rush, Dr. Dy said, and take advantage of the many local fireworks displays.

“The thing about professional shows, is that they have professionals who have licenses to work with fireworks that are much, much more impressive,” Dr. Dy said. “The safest thing by far is to go and see a show and call it quits.”